DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 363 603 SP 034 826

AUTHOR Wagenheim, Gary; Gemmill, Gary
TITLE Feedback Exchange: Managing Group Closure.
PUB DATE [93]
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Society for Exploring Teaching Alternatives (23rd).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Course Content; Course Organization; Discussion Groups; Experiential Learning; *Feedback; Group Discussion; *Group Dynamics; Higher Education; *Organizational Development; *Student Development

ABSTRACT

A common problem in an "experiential class" is the lack of attention devoted to group closure at the end of the course. Toward the end of the semester, students working in small groups in organizational behavior classes often experience anxiety over losing the support and identity that they enjoyed as members of a small learning group. A final assessment of group learning is vital, so members have an opportunity to clarify the meaning of their experiences in the group, to consolidate the gains they made, and to decide what newly acquired behaviors they want to transfer to their everyday lives. A feedback exercise assignment for the end of the course is presented to help manage the adjournment. The assignment involves having students provide members of their group with written feedback concerning how they personally experienced their fellow students' behavior in the group. Students circle any comments that they can also "own" about themselves. Group members then discuss the feedback. A closing exercise for the class as a whole is to have each small group write what they learned about themselves, about others, and about groups. In reading other groups' responses, students are encouraged to look for universal themes and differences among groups. (JDD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 363 603

Feedback Exchange:
Managing Group Closure

by

Gary Wagenheim

Department of Organizational Leadership and Supervision

School of Technology

Purdue University

and

Gary Gemmill

School of Management

Syracuse University

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J Wagenheim

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

S B34826

A common problem in an "experiential class" is the lack of attention devoted to group closure at the end of the course. Much time and effort is devoted to teaching four stages of group development identified by Tuckman (1965) as forming, storming, norming, and performing. Unfortunately, the crucial last stage of adjournment is often neglected.

Toward the end of the semester students working in small groups in organizational behavior classes often experience anxiety over losing the support and identity that they enjoyed as members of a small learning group. The anxiety surrounding the end of the group experience may cause students to prematurely distance themselves in an effort to avoid their feelings of loss, thereby missing an opportunity to synthesize their learning through examining of their behavior with others. The final assessment of group leaning is vital, for members have an opportunity to clarify the meaning of their experiences in the group, to consolidate the gains they made, and to decide what newly acquired behaviors they want to transfer to their everyday lives (Corey and Corey, 1987). Closure in groups is more than the end... if properly understood and managed, it is an important force in the instigation of change in an individual (Yalom, 1985). It is a time for individuals to process memories of the group, review one's self-worth, reflect on the experience, think about what was learned, say good-bye, and discuss the ambivalent feelings of the group and course ending.

The time constraints created by the scheduling of exams, instructor's evaluations, and not wanting to leave out course material might be cited as common reasons for not processing the adjourning stage. Also, an instructor's reluctance may be due to his/her own personal discomfort in handling good-bye or not knowing a good method to use for the process. Regardless of reasons, the need to address the closure stage is as important, if not more important, than any other stage the groups go through. Time should be set aside for students to say good-bye and provide group members with feedback about their behavior. Without a mechanism in place to manage closure, the course experience and learning is incomplete.

As the course ends members should give interpersonal feedback about how they experienced each other's behavior to help facilitate the individual learning process. A feedback exercise assignment at the end of the course will help manage the adjournment by serving the following purposes.

1. Provide individual feedback necessary for examining the role each member assumed in the group.
2. Provide an opportunity to develop skills in providing interpersonal feedback.
3. Provide a forum for resolving group issues that might remain as unfinished business.
4. Enable members to make a smooth transition to the inevitable termination of the group and the change of relationships.

5. Structure a planned time and place for the activity.

6. Place emphasis on the importance of feelings and endings.

7. Assign responsibility and accountability to group members for feedback.

Feedback Exchange Assignment

Student Instructions

The interpersonal feedback assignment consists of providing members of your group with honest written feedback as to how you personally experienced their behavior in your group. This exercise allows members to receive feedback from their peers and to check it with their own perceptions.

Please write the feedback in letter form utilizing the sentence completion stems as a guide. Feel free to be creative and add to the categories. You should write a separate letter for each member including yourself. Include your name and number so members can seek you out for clarification.

Date _____

Name _____,

The way I experienced you behavior in the group.....

What I personally feel you contributed to the group.....

The role I feel you played in the group.....

Something you could do in future groups to improve.....

A symbolic gift I would like to give you for use in future groups.....

Other comments.....

My name _____ My address _____

My # _____ _____

Instructor's Guide for Processing

Ideally, the entire class period on the last day of the semester should be devoted to closure. The feedback process should be discussed at least a week in advance so that members can begin to think about their feelings. Letters should be written ahead of time and brought to the last class. Students should not distribute their letters until instructed to do so. Prior to distribution, students should be instructed to reread all letters and circle any comments that they can also "own" about themselves. Receivers will know that circled comments also reflect the behaviors of the senders. This will help students understand the effect projection has on feedback by bringing feelings about behavior to awareness and making it a discussable issue.

Students should be placed in their groups and the instructor should hand out the Student's Guide For Processing Interpersonal Feedback. The groups should be given ample time (15-20 minutes) and to discuss any and all issues that they deem appropriate.

Student's Guide For Processing Interpersonal Feedback

Before you distribute the feedback you have written for members of your group, read through what you have written for each member and underline or circle those things that you feel are also true about you. That is, your feedback may be valid and appropriate to the other person but it is likely that what you have written is also valid and appropriate for you.

This is an example of interpersonal projection in action. We all do it and becoming aware of what we project can provide us with useful insights into our self. Denial and avoidance of our projections diminishes our vitality and emotional honesty with ourselves and others. Projection is a normal psychological process that occurs on a daily basis in our lives. The process of interpersonal projection is, in part, how we construe the social reality directly around us. Our social world is a mirror for us that we can use to reflect ourselves on others in order to more clearly see ourselves. When we "own" our feedback ("This is true about me and maybe it is true about you...") we usually decrease interpersonal defensiveness and increase our learning.

After checking the projections, distribute the feedback to the members of your group. When you have collected all the feedback for you from other group members, slowly read through it. What theme, if any, do you find running through the feedback? How does the feedback from others compare with your feedback to your

self? What feedback would you like further clarification on? What feedback did you feel upset by? What feedback did you find especially affirming? When all members have read through their feedback, they should discuss their reaction in the total group and seek elaboration on the feedback from other group members. Individuals should reread their own letter to themselves and check it against the feedback received for congruence. Examine what the feedback seems to indicate about each member's overt/ covert role within the group.

Closing Exercise

In addition to this activity, a closing exercise for the groups and the class as a whole is to use sentence completion stems on large newsprint taped to the walls. Each group should have their own set (one page headed with a sentence stem for each of the four stems) as follows.

I'm left feeling.....

Something I learned about myself.....

Something I learned about others.....

Something I learned about groups.....

Students should be given various colored markers and encouraged to draw pictures, symbols or write comments under each stem. The instructor may personally join the activity and add comments. The instructor can also give feedback to the class as a whole and

individually seek out students to tell them how s/he experienced their behavior.

After they have finished writing they are encouraged to walk around the room and read other group's responses. They should be reminded to look for universal themes and differences between the groups. Struggling with asking and giving feedback for clarification is part of the learning process so students should be encouraged not to leave until they feel comfortable with what they said and what they received as feedback. It is not unusual for groups to meet outside of class to continue saying good-by or to continue to meet as a social group.

Variations

1. Change the sentence stems to reflect the particular class.
2. Take the class to a different setting for the last day.
3. Have the students include a letter to the instructor.
4. Have groups design their own form of feedback.

References

Corey, M. S. & Corey, G. (1987) *Groups: Process And Practice*. Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., Third Edition.

Tuckman, B. W. (1965) Developmental Sequences In Small Groups. *Psychological Bulletin*, V63, 384-399.

Yalom, I. D. (1985) *The Theory And Practice Of Group Psychotherapy*. Basic Books.